



Decision

CP

Alvin N. Kirsch - Travel Expenses for
Interrupted Vacation

Matter of:

B-231458

File:

Date: September 9, 1988

DIGEST

An employee, who was recalled to duty soon after departing on annual leave, may not be reimbursed the travel expenses to his leave destination. Airfare to the employee's vacation destination was in the nature of a personal expense which does not become a government obligation following cancellation of annual leave.

DECISION

The question presented in this case is whether Mr. Alvin N. Kirsch, an employee of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), United States Department of Commerce, is entitled to be reimbursed airfare to his vacation point when his vacation was cancelled due to an emergency callback to duty immediately after departing on annual leave.^{1/} For the reasons indicated below, we conclude that Mr. Kirsch is not entitled to reimbursement.

BACKGROUND

Mr. Kirsch departed his duty post onboard the NOAA research ship "Oceanographer" on August 17, 1986, for his scheduled annual leave, flying from Dutch Harbor, Alaska, to Seattle, Washington. His airfare was \$655.02 for a one-way ticket to his leave destination and was paid at his own expense. On August 19, 1986, a crewmember of the "Oceanographer" became ill and Mr. Kirsch was contacted on the same day and directed to return to the ship to assume the duties of that crewmember. Since there were apparently no flights that would have brought Mr. Kirsch to the ship before it departed Dutch Harbor on August 20, Mr. Kirsch was directed to travel

^{1/} This question was submitted by Certifying Officer C. J. Terry of the Department of Commerce's Western Administrative Support Center (NOAA), Seattle, Washington.

to Nome, Alaska, where the ship would be in port on August 23, 1986. Mr. Kirsch departed Seattle on August 22 to meet the ship the following day. Mr. Kirsch is seeking reimbursement for his airfare of \$655.02 to his annual leave destination.

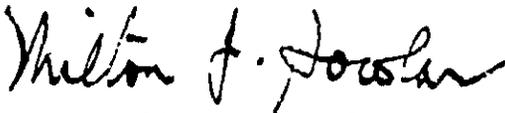
OPINION

The certifying officer in this case could not find any authority under which reimbursement could be made for Mr. Kirsch's airfare. Our own research also has not revealed any law or regulation under which we could authorize payment to Mr. Kirsch.

Generally speaking, personal expenses necessitated by emergency recall may not be reimbursed. See Delbert C. Nahm, B-191588, Jan. 2, 1979; Dr. Karl G. Kessler, B-190755, June 15, 1978; B-176721, Nov. 9, 1972. The airfare expense incurred by Mr. Kirsch in traveling to his leave destination was a personal expense, not incident to official business, and thus does not become a government obligation upon cancellation of his approved leave.

We have held in the past that expenses incurred by an employee in traveling to his or her leave destination are personal expenses and not reimbursable after an emergency callback to duty. B-110721, Aug. 8, 1952. Mr. Kirsch's case must be contrasted with situations in which employees seek reimbursement for return travel expenses to their official duty stations from their leave locations or situations where employees seek reimbursement of travel expenses involved in returning to their duty stations and back to their leave destinations to continue leave after recall duty has ended. See 39 Comp. Gen. 611 (1960); Kessler, ^x supra.

Since Mr. Kirsch's claim for reimbursement was not in fact for either return travel to his duty station or for travel back to his leave destination after temporary duty, there is no basis for authorizing payment of the voucher.

for 
 Comptroller General
 of the United States